

## NOTES ICHTYOLOGIQUES

SYNONYMY OF *BARBUS TSHOPOENSIS* DE VOS, 1991 AND *B. BRAZZAI* PELLEGRIN, 1901 (TELEOSTEI; CYPRINIDAE).

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In a communication on some small *Barbus* species from the Zaïre Basin, the author described *B. tshopoensis* as a new species from the Middle Zaïre drainage (De Vos, 1991). However, when recently consulting a paper of Mahnert and Géry (1982) on *Barbus* species from the Ivindo River (Upper Ogowe), the resemblance between *Barbus brazzai* Pellegrin, 1901, redescribed and commented on by Mahnert and Géry on pages 482-484, and *B. tshopoensis* was very striking. In fact, when describing *B. tshopoensis*, the present author did not compare the Zaïre specimens with *B. brazzai* from the Ogowe because in the original description by Pellegrin (1901) and in subsequent papers (Pellegrin, 1907a, b) the latter species was reported to completely lack barbels. Consequently the author did not take this nominal species into consideration and did not examine Ogowe-specimens, because the individuals from the Zaïre system at his disposal for the description of *B. tshopoensis*, showed two to four short barbels. However, it is known that in some *Barbus* species the development of the barbels can be rather variable and probably influenced by environmental factors.

Matthes (1964) recorded *B. brazzai* from the Zaïre Basin, Tshuapa System (specimens in Tervuren collection, n°131234-238) and mentioned the presence of short, rudimentary barbels. Those specimens are clearly conspecific with the type material of *B. tshopoensis*. Mahnert and Géry (1982) however put some doubt on the identification by Matthes, because they stated there is a

slight difference in coloration between the Zaïre and Ogowe populations: "En revanche, nous ne sommes pas tout à fait convaincus de l'identification de cette espèce provenant de la région d'Ikela (riv. Mokombe) (Matthes, 1964). La description détaillée de la coloration ne mentionne pas le liséré noir typique de la dorsale, mais fait état au contraire d'un noircissement des rayons antérieurs. *Barbus brazzai* Pell. se trouve probablement limité au bassin de l'Ogôoué et des eaux très voisines." (p. 484).

In the Tervuren Museum, the author recently identified an up to now unclassified sample of small *Barbus* from the Ogowe System as *B. brazzai* (KMMA n°88-28-P-326-450; Booué, rivière Ogôoué, Gabon, coll. Van Neer) and compared it with the large type series of *B. tshopoensis*. The Ogowe specimens indeed do completely lack barbels, have a slightly longer caudal peduncle, and show a dorsal fin with the upper border somewhat darker than the Zaïre specimens; 26-28 scales were counted in the lateral line (against 25-27 in the Zaïre population). Besides these very small differences, both populations have an identical habitus and no important differences were found in other meristics or body proportions. It seems reasonable to accept that both populations belong to the same species and the very small differences are undoubtedly due to geographical isolation. The disjunct distribution of the species is not very surprising: many species are shared between the Ogowe Basin and the Zaïre System. Roberts (1975) mentioned a recent influx of fish species from the Zaïre System into the Ogowe but unknown from the rest of Lower Guinea. This influx is indicated by *Barbus brazzai* and several other typical Zairian fish.

Both populations might be considered as different races or subspecies and each be given different subspecific names. Even though there are some minor differences between the populations of the Ogowe and the Zaïre Systems, the author considers that, at the present state of knowledge, it is not appropriate to give subspecific names within the group of small African *Barbus*. Presently clear criteria to define subspecies are completely lacking and we are still far away from a complete insight into the diversity, variability, distribution and phyletic relationships of this heterogeneous group.

In summary we can conclude that *B. tshopoensis* De Vos, 1991 is a junior synonym of *B. brazzai* Pellegrin, 1901.

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